

Dear Chairman Powell and Commissioners,

I am upset by the misuse of our public air ways. I want real information on the issues of health care, the economy, the war in Iraq, the war on terrorism, college financial aid, insurance, corporate scandals, the environment, the welfare of our schools, and social security. The broadcast networks are not providing useful information; only shallow sound bites. They discuss the issues by using the word "issues" a lot with out providing any substance. The media created the "sound bite" and now the candidates can only be successful if they pander to the sound bite. Meanwhile, nothing of substance is ever presented or discussed.

As a citizen who wants to be informed about the political and electoral issues the last place I turn to is our public air ways. Over 50% of the American public still believe that Iraq had something to do with 9-11, Saddam had WMDs, and there was/is a link between Iraq and Osama Bin Laden. Our public airways are failing the American people if they can't inform the people and dispel these basic myths. People are voting on whether a guy looks good because they have no other information to base their vote on.

Local public affairs programming is virtually non-existent--constituting less than one half of 1% of all local programming. More than half of news broadcasts prior to the 2002 elections did not include a single campaign story. Our democracy is at risk when many Americans don't know basic facts about the candidates or the issues, as was the case in the 2000 elections.

Since broadcasters have clearly failed in their obligation to serve the public interest, the FCC should define meaningful public interest requirements that include local civic and electoral affairs programming. At a minimum, broadcasters should air three hours per week of local civic and electoral affairs programming, with at least two hours devoted to substantive election coverage in the six weeks prior to Election Day.

As the elections approach, a well-functioning democracy demands that citizens have access to a diversity of opinions and voices on the choices confronting us.

Sincerely,

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